



# SCRS Member Handbook

July 2006 Edition



**Retirement  
Systems**

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Employers covered by the South Carolina Retirement Systems are not agents of the Retirement Systems.

The information in this handbook is meant to serve as a guide, but does not constitute a binding representation of the South Carolina Retirement Systems. The statutes governing the South Carolina Retirement Systems are found in Title 9 of the South Carolina Code of Laws, and should there be any conflict between this handbook and the statutes or the Retirement Systems' policies, the statutes and policies will prevail. Because state statutes are subject to change by the General Assembly, please contact us for the most current information.

*Duplication of this handbook, either in part or in whole, is forbidden without the express written permission of the South Carolina Retirement Systems.*

**THE LANGUAGE USED IN THIS DOCUMENT DOES NOT CREATE ANY CONTRACTUAL RIGHTS OR ENTITLEMENTS AND DOES NOT CREATE A CONTRACT BETWEEN THE MEMBER AND THE SOUTH CAROLINA RETIREMENT SYSTEMS. THE SOUTH CAROLINA RETIREMENT SYSTEMS RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REVISE THE CONTENT OF THIS DOCUMENT.**

## General Information

The South Carolina Retirement System (SCRS) is a defined benefit retirement plan administered by the South Carolina Retirement Systems, a division of the State Budget and Control Board. This handbook provides a general introduction to SCRS and its benefits.

If you chose participation in the State Optional Retirement Program (State ORP) defined contribution plan in lieu of SCRS membership, contact your State ORP vendor for benefits information.

## Membership

SCRS membership starts when you begin earning compensation from a covered employer and begin making contributions to SCRS.

An active member is employed by an employer covered by the Retirement Systems, earning service credit, making regular contributions to an SCRS retirement account, and not retired or terminated from covered employment. You must be an active member to receive most of the benefits outlined in this handbook. Active members receive a member statement each year that shows employee contributions and interest, service credit, and retirement account beneficiaries.

## Correlated Systems

SCRS, Police Officers Retirement System (PORS), and General Assembly Retirement System (GARS) are correlated systems. If you have contributions in more than one of these retirement systems, your service credit is maintained separately within each system; however, your service credit is added together to determine your eligibility for retirement benefits.

## Contribution Rates

You contribute a tax-deferred 6.5 percent of gross pay into your SCRS retirement account. If you have not retired, your account earns 4 percent interest compounded annually on your balance as of the previous June 30.

***SCRS was established July 1, 1945. Membership is comprised of state employees, public and charter school employees, public higher education personnel, and employees of cities, counties, and other local subdivisions of government that have joined the Retirement Systems.***





## Group Life Insurance Benefit

State agencies and public school districts are required to provide group life insurance to employees. The coverage is optional for other employers. If an employer provides group life insurance to its employees, the employer must pay the associated contribution for this coverage.

If you are an active member and die in service with at least one year of service credit, a payment equal to your current annual earnable compensation will be paid to your beneficiary or trustee. If your death results from a job-related injury, the one-year requirement is waived. Group life insurance benefits are considered life insurance proceeds which are not taxable.

*If you purchase service to meet retirement eligibility, payment must be made in full prior to your retirement date.*



## Service Credit

### Establishing Service Credit

Active members may establish credit for various types of service including previous employment, leave of absences, and up to five years of non-qualified service. Descriptions of these types of service credit begin on Page 3.

### Purchasing Service Credit

You may purchase service credit by a lump-sum payment, an installment service purchase (pre-tax or after-tax, plus interest), or a tax-deferred rollover from an Individual Retirement Account (IRA), a 401(k) plan, a 401(a) eligible plan, a 403(b) plan, or a 457 plan.

You may purchase each type of service credit once within a fiscal year. If you are purchasing service to meet retirement eligibility, contact the Retirement Systems for more information. Payment for service purchases required for eligibility must be remitted in full prior to your retirement date or termination.

If you previously purchased periods of part time credit or previously earned periods of part time credit, you may be eligible to purchase additional service credit at an additional cost. Please contact the Retirement Systems for more information.

Some types of purchased service may not be used in determining insurance eligibility. If you experienced a leave of absence from your employer, especially during your last five years of employment, your insurance eligibility may also be affected. Contact your employer or health insurance provider for insurance coverage questions. If you are covered by state health insurance, contact the Employee Insurance Program at (888) 260-9430 or at (803) 734-0678 for eligibility information.

## Descriptions of Types of Service

### Convert Class I to Class II

If you are an SCRS member who still has Class I service, you may convert your Class I service to Class II service by paying 2.5 percent of either your current earnable compensation or the average of your 12 highest consecutive quarters of earnable compensation, whichever is greater, for each year to be converted.

### Public Service

You may establish service credit for any period of paid public service for which you do not already have service credit in another defined benefit plan from which you may receive an annuity. Public service constitutes service as an employee of the government of the United States, a state, or political subdivision of the United States. The cost is 16 percent of current earnable compensation or career highest fiscal year earnable compensation, whichever is greater, for each year purchased. If you have established State ORP service in SCRS, your career highest salary includes your salary in either State ORP or SCRS.

### Educational Service (K-12)

You may establish service credit for any period of paid classroom teaching consisting of grades kindergarten through 12 in a public, private, or sectarian school for which you do not already have service credit in another defined benefit plan from which you may receive an annuity. The cost is 16 percent of current earnable compensation or career highest fiscal year earnable compensation, whichever is greater, for each year purchased. If you have established State ORP service in SCRS, your career highest salary includes your salary in either State ORP or SCRS.

### Military Service

You may establish up to six years of service credit for any period of military service for which you do not already have service credit. This includes service in the United States Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Coast Guard, Select Reserves, and Army or Air National Guard. The cost is 16 percent of current earnable compensation or career highest fiscal year earnable compensation, whichever is greater, for each year purchased. If you have established State ORP service in SCRS, your career highest salary includes your salary in either State ORP or SCRS. Your discharge from service must be under conditions other than dishonorable. Under guidelines set forth by the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA), you may also arrange in advance with your employer to continue contributing to your account while on active duty military leave.

***Generally, if you are on leave without pay from a participating employer, you are not eligible to purchase service credit of any type.***



### Leave of Absence

Active contributing members on an employer-approved leave of absence who return to covered employment within four years may purchase service credit for the employer-approved leave period for which they do not already have service credit, up to a maximum of two years per leave of absence. The leave of absence must be with an employer covered by the Retirement Systems. The cost is 16 percent of current earnable compensation or career highest fiscal year earnable compensation, whichever is greater, for each year purchased. If you have established State ORP service in SCRS, your career highest salary includes your salary in either State ORP or SCRS.

*Remember, some types of purchased service may not be used in determining insurance eligibility. Be sure to contact your employer or health insurance provider for insurance coverage questions.*



### Workers' Compensation

You may establish service credit for a period while on leave of absence and receiving Workers' Compensation benefits. The cost is based on contributions plus interest using your earnable compensation at the time of injury. You may also arrange in advance with your employer to continue contributing to your account while you are receiving Workers' Compensation benefits.

### Previously Withdrawn SCRS Service

If you left employment and received a refund of your contributions plus interest from the Retirement Systems, you may re-establish this service upon returning to active membership. You must repay the amount you withdrew plus interest to the date your request is received. Previously withdrawn earned service that is re-established in SCRS through the service purchase process is considered earned service for the determination of the minimum service requirement for benefit eligibility. Please note that earnings associated with a re-established withdrawal will be considered for possible inclusion in the calculation of a member's average final compensation and any subsequent service purchase costs.

### Non-Qualified Service

Active contributing members who have five or more years of earned service credit may establish up to five years of non-qualified service. The cost is 35 percent of current earnable compensation or career highest fiscal year earnable compensation, whichever is greater, for each year purchased. If you have established State ORP service in SCRS, your career highest salary includes your salary in either State ORP or SCRS.

### State ORP Service

You may purchase service credit for your years of participation in the State ORP. The cost is 16 percent of current earnable compensation or career highest fiscal year earnable compensation in either SCRS or State ORP, whichever is greater, for each year of service purchased. You may not purchase service for a period of State ORP participation for which you may receive a retirement

annuity from another defined benefit retirement plan. State ORP service that is established in SCRS through the service purchase process is considered earned service for the determination of the SCRS minimum service requirement for benefit eligibility. Salaries associated with State ORP service purchased in SCRS will be considered for possible inclusion in the calculation of a member's average final compensation.

## Leaving before Retirement

If you leave your job and terminate all employment covered by the South Carolina Retirement Systems, you have two options concerning your contributions:

- request a refund of your contributions and interest; or
- leave your funds in the Retirement System.

### Request a Refund

To receive a refund of your accumulated contributions and interest, you must complete a refund request form and return it to the Retirement Systems. You may submit your refund request immediately upon termination; however, by law, there is a minimum 90-day waiting period from your date of termination until a refund can be made. If you request a refund, you forfeit your rights to any future service retirement or disability annuity. Employer contributions are not refunded. If you are working for two or more covered employers and/or contributing to more than one retirement account (i.e., working two jobs and paying into an SCRS and a PORS account), you must stop working in all correlated systems to request a refund from any account.

Instead of having the refund paid directly to you, you may choose to roll over the funds into an IRA, a 401(k) plan, a 401(a) eligible plan, a 403(b) plan, or some 457 plans (the South Carolina Deferred Compensation Program's 457 plan does not accept rollovers from your Retirement Systems account). The Retirement Systems is required to withhold federal taxes of 20 percent on the taxable portion of any refund that is not transferred directly into another qualified retirement plan. Other taxes may apply as well. Check with an accountant or tax advisor regarding your tax liability.

*If you leave your job before retirement and request a refund, there is a minimum 90-day waiting period from your date of termination until a refund can be made.*



## Leave Funds on Deposit

When you leave your money on deposit, your account continues to accrue interest and you retain your years of service credit, which may be added to any future service you may accrue should you later be employed in a position covered by this retirement system. You may apply for a refund at a later date or apply for a service retirement annuity upon reaching eligibility, including minimum service requirements. No action is required if you wish to retain your membership and leave the funds on deposit but it is your responsibility to keep the Retirement Systems informed of your current address or any change in name or beneficiary.

***You are not required to withdraw your contributions and interest at termination, regardless of your credited service time toward retirement.***



## Service Retirement

A good way to begin the planning process for retirement is to attend a Retirement Systems pre-retirement seminar offered through your employer. Sessions are held regionally upon request based on availability. Contact Customer Services for seminar dates.

If you are considering retirement, you should request that your service be audited and schedule an appointment with a retirement consultant to discuss your eligibility. You can contact Customer Services to make an appointment.

### When to Apply

You must file an application with the Retirement Systems to retire; it is not automatic. We encourage you to file your application as early as six months prior to your desired effective date of retirement but no later than 90 days afterward. However, before an effective date of retirement can be established, you must be removed from your employer's payroll unless you begin Teacher and Employee Retention Incentive program (TERI) participation on your date of retirement (see Page 12).

Retirement applications and other forms are available via our Internet Web site at [www.retirement.sc.gov](http://www.retirement.sc.gov) or you may contact the Retirement Systems' Customer Services Center at (800) 868-9002 or (803) 737-6800.

If you do not receive notification of our receipt of your application within 10 days after you submitted it, contact Customer Services. Please do not terminate employment until the Retirement Systems has audited your service credit and you receive official notice of your retirement eligibility.



Annuity estimates may be obtained from the Retirement Systems but are projected based on information you provide as well as available system information. Annuity estimates are subject to change upon an audit of your account after your application is received.

### Eligibility

If you meet the following requirements, you are considered eligible to retire (see *Correlated Systems* on Page 1 if you have an account in more than one retirement system):

#### **If Your Membership Began Before January 1, 2001: Normal Retirement (Unreduced Annuity):**

- 28 years of service credit;
- Age 65 with at least five years of combined creditable service on December 31, 2000, **or** on December 31, 2000, must be both at least age 60 and an active contributing member.

#### **Early Retirement (Reduced Annuity):**

- Age 60 with at least five years of combined creditable service on December 31, 2000, **or** on December 31, 2000, must be both at least age 60 and an active contributing member. Your annuity is permanently reduced 5 percent for each year of age less than 65; or
- Age 55 or older with 25 years of service credit, five years of which must be creditable service on December 31, 2000. Your annuity is permanently reduced 4 percent for each year of service credit less than 28. Cost-of-living adjustment restrictions apply (see Page 14).

#### **If Your Membership Began After December 31, 2000: Normal Retirement (Unreduced Annuity):**

- 28 years of service credit, five years of which must be earned service; or
- Age 65 with five years of earned service.

#### **Early Retirement (Reduced Annuity):**

- Age 60 with at least five years of earned service. Your annuity is permanently reduced 5 percent for each year of age less than 65; or
- Age 55 or older with 25 years of service credit, five years of which must be earned service. Your annuity is permanently reduced 4 percent for each year of service credit less than 28. Cost-of-living adjustment restrictions apply (see Page 14).

### Your Average Final Compensation

Your average final compensation (AFC) is an important part of the formula used to calculate your retirement benefit. When you retire, your first several benefit checks will be based on information received up to that point. This is called estimated status.

***You must file an application with the Retirement Systems to retire; it's not automatic.***



After your employer submits your final earnable compensation information, retirement contributions for your 12 highest consecutive quarters of earnable compensation will be audited. Your AFC may be adjusted after the audit if any of the contributions included in the AFC calculation were for any payments not considered a part of your regular salary base. Your AFC also will be adjusted to include payment for your unused annual leave according to statute.

As a result of the information received from your employer and the audit of the contributions for your 12 highest consecutive quarters of earnable compensation, your retirement benefit will be finalized. The final amount may be less than, or more than, your estimated benefit.

### Service Retirement Annuity Formula

The following four-step formula is used to calculate your standard monthly annuity.

#### Service Annuity Example

$$\text{AFC} = \$25,000$$

$$\text{Creditable service} = 28 \text{ years}$$

$$\$25,000 \times 1.82\% (.0182) = \$455$$

$$\$455 \times 28 = \$12,740$$

(annual retirement annuity)

$$\$12,740 \div 12 = \mathbf{\$1,061.67}$$

(standard monthly annuity)

**Step 1** Total your 12 highest consecutive quarters of earnable compensation and divide by 3.

The dollar amount of payment for up to 45 days of unused annual leave paid by your last employer at retirement may be included before averaging your 12 highest consecutive quarters of earnable compensation. The result of Step 1 is your AFC.

**Step 2** Multiply the result of Step 1 by 1.82 percent (.0182) for Class II service or by 1.45 percent (.0145) for Class I service.

**Step 3** Multiply the result of Step 2 by years, months, and days of creditable service.

Convert months to days and divide the total days by 360 to determine a decimal equivalent for partial years. For example, 25 years, 2 months and 10 days equals 25 years, 70 days (60 + 10).  $70 \div 360 = .19$ . This amounts to 25.19 years of service.

**Step 4** Divide the result of Step 3 by 12.

## Unused Leave At Retirement

### Annual Leave

Only an amount up to and including 45 days pay for unused annual leave from your last termination payment shall be included before averaging your 12 highest consecutive quarters of earnable compensation (see Step 1 of the annuity formula on Page 8).

### Sick Leave

At retirement, you may receive service credit for up to 90 days of unused sick leave from your last employer at no cost to you (see Step 3 of the annuity formula on Page 8). This service credit cannot be used to establish retirement eligibility. Sick leave is reported by your employer after retirement. One month of service credit is granted for each 20 days of sick leave.

### School District and Higher Education Employees

To calculate an appropriate AFC, adjustments may be required so that you receive credit for three full years of earnings. Adjustments may be needed for changes in payroll cycles, contract payouts, and any other occurrence that could potentially cause the AFC to include more or less than three full years of earnings.

## Payment Plans at Retirement

There are three monthly annuity payment plans available to you at retirement. Select the one that best suits your needs. Your payment plan may not be changed once benefits are first payable.

### Option A (Maximum Retiree Only Monthly Annuity) Payment Plan

This plan will pay you a standard lifetime annuity based on your average final compensation, years of service, and a multiplier (.0182 for Class II or .0145 for Class I). Upon your death, the Retirement Systems will return, through a lump-sum payment to your beneficiary or your estate, the remaining balance of any member contributions and interest and any working retiree contributions not exhausted through receipt of annuity benefits during your retirement.

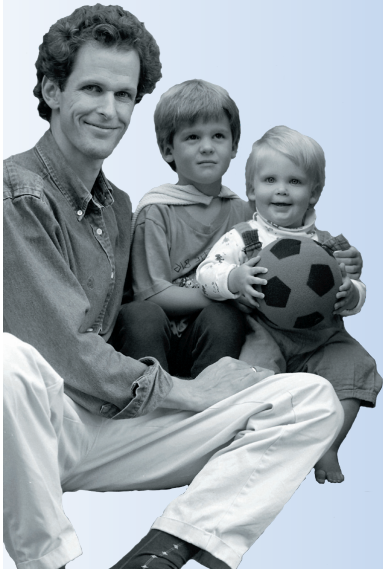
### Option B (100% - 100% Joint Retiree-Survivor Monthly Annuity) Payment Plan

You will receive a reduced (from Option A) monthly annuity for life. Upon your death, the same annuity (100 percent of your reduced monthly annuity, including granted cost-of-living adjustments) will continue throughout your beneficiary's lifetime. If your designated beneficiary predeceases you, your annuity will revert to Option A, including any cost-of-living adjustments granted since your retirement date.

*You choose one of the three available monthly annuity payment plans that best suits your needs.*



***Both Option B and Option C are joint retiree-survivor payment plans that, upon your death, pays your beneficiaries a monthly annuity throughout their lifetime.***



### **Option C (100% - 50% Joint Retiree-Survivor Monthly Annuity) Payment Plan**

You will receive a reduced (from Option A) monthly annuity for life. Upon your death, one-half of the annuity (50 percent of your reduced monthly annuity, including granted cost-of-living adjustments) will continue throughout your beneficiary's lifetime. If your designated beneficiary predeceases you, your annuity will revert to Option A, including any cost-of-living adjustments granted since your retirement date.

### **If You Choose Option B or Option C**

If you choose Option B or Option C and name multiple beneficiaries, upon your death your annuity will be divided equally among them. The annuity will not change for the remaining beneficiaries if one beneficiary dies, either before or after the member dies. If you select Option B or Option C and all of your designated beneficiaries predecease you, your annuity will revert to Option A effective on the date the last beneficiary died. You must notify the Retirement Systems upon the death of a beneficiary.

### **Approximate Percentage of Monthly Annuity at Retirement**

The information below is based on the standard annuity payment plan (Option A). Choosing Options B or C to provide a future annuity for beneficiaries will reduce the amount of your monthly annuity.

Service and Age	Percentage	Type of Benefit
25 years at age 55	40%	Reduced Early Retirement
26 years at age 55	44%	Reduced Early Retirement
27 years at age 55	47%	Reduced Early Retirement
28 years at any age	51%	Normal Retirement
29 years at any age	53%	Normal Retirement
30 years at any age	55%	Normal Retirement



## Approximate Amount of Option A Monthly Annuity at Retirement

The information in the table below is based on the standard annuity payment plan (Option A). Choosing Options B or C to provide a future annuity for beneficiaries (or retiring with SCRS early retirement reductions) will reduce the amount of your monthly annuity.

AFC	Years of Service						Additional Monthly Benefit for Each Additional Year
	25*	26*	27*	28	29	30	
<b>\$15,000</b>	\$ 569	\$ 592	\$ 614	\$ 637	\$ 660	\$ 683	\$ 23
<b>20,000</b>	758	789	819	849	880	910	30
<b>25,000</b>	948	986	1,024	1,062	1,100	1,138	38
<b>30,000</b>	1,138	1,183	1,229	1,274	1,320	1,365	46
<b>35,000</b>	1,327	1,380	1,433	1,486	1,539	1,593	53
<b>40,000</b>	1,517	1,577	1,638	1,699	1,759	1,820	61
<b>45,000</b>	1,706	1,775	1,843	1,911	1,979	2,048	68
<b>50,000</b>	1,896	1,972	2,048	2,123	2,199	2,275	76
<b>55,000</b>	2,085	2,169	2,252	2,336	2,419	2,503	83
<b>60,000</b>	2,275	2,366	2,457	2,548	2,639	2,730	91
<b>65,000</b>	2,465	2,563	2,662	2,760	2,859	2,958	99
<b>70,000</b>	2,654	2,760	2,867	2,973	3,079	3,185	106
<b>75,000</b>	2,844	2,958	3,071	3,185	3,299	3,413	114
<b>80,000</b>	3,033	3,155	3,276	3,397	3,519	3,640	121
<b>85,000</b>	3,223	3,352	3,481	3,610	3,739	3,868	129
<b>90,000</b>	3,413	3,549	3,686	3,822	3,959	4,095	137
<b>95,000</b>	3,602	3,746	3,890	4,034	4,178	4,323	144
<b>100,000</b>	3,792	3,943	4,095	4,247	4,398	4,550	152
<b>105,000</b>	3,981	4,141	4,300	4,459	4,618	4,778	159
<b>110,000</b>	4,171	4,338	4,505	4,671	4,838	5,005	167

\* SCRS early retirement deductions may apply. Early deduction may be due to age 60, age 55 with 25 years of service or less than 28 years.

## TERI Program

If you are eligible for service retirement you may elect to participate in the Teacher and Employee Retiree Incentive program (TERI). TERI allows you to retire and begin accumulating your retirement annuity on a deferred basis without terminating employment. You must enroll at the time of retirement.

By participating in TERI, you may defer receipt of your retirement annuity for up to 60 months. Your monthly retirement annuity is accumulated in your TERI account. No interest is paid on annuity benefits accumulated in your TERI account. Retiree cost-of-living adjustments are applied to a TERI participant's monthly annuity in the same manner in which other retirees receive such adjustments.

You may participate in TERI only once. If you retired previously and received a service or a disability retirement annuity under SCRS, you are not eligible to participate in the TERI program.

During your TERI period, you are eligible for the contributing retiree group life insurance benefit equal to one year's salary, but you are not eligible for disability retirement.

If you die while participating in TERI, in addition to any group life insurance benefits, the total amount of your annuity accumulated in your TERI account will be distributed to the beneficiary designated for your retirement annuity. A surviving spouse who is designated as beneficiary may elect to roll over the taxable portion of the TERI balance into an IRA, a 401(k) plan, a 401(a) eligible plan, a 403(b) plan, or a 457 plan.

At the end of your TERI period, you must terminate employment. Confirmation of your actual termination date is required from your employer. You may then receive the balance in your TERI account through either a taxable, single-sum distribution payable directly to you or through a tax-deferred rollover into a qualified retirement plan. Any distribution paid directly to you is subject to ordinary federal and state income taxes and may be subject to an additional 10 percent federal penalty for early withdrawal.

If you plan to return to work for a covered employer after your TERI period ends, you must consult your employer regarding the employer's employment severance and return-to-work policy.

***If you plan to return to work for a covered employer after your TERI period ends, be sure to find out about the employer's employment severance and return-to-work policy. You are not guaranteed employment; your employer decides whether or not to hire you after your TERI period has ended.***



Your TERI period will count toward the requirement that you be retired for at least 15 days before returning to work for a covered employer (see Page 20). You are not guaranteed employment; a covered employer decides whether or not to hire you after your TERI period has ended. Regardless of your TERI retirement date, if you return to work after your TERI participation has ended, you will pay working retiree contributions like active members.

### TERI Participants with Retirement Dates on or After July 1, 2005

The following guidelines apply to TERI participants with retirement dates on or after July 1, 2005.

#### Contribution Rates

During your TERI period you will pay the same pre-tax contribution rate as active members for the duration of your TERI period; however, you will not earn service credit or interest on your account.

#### Unused Annual Leave and Your AFC

The first several annuity benefits posted to your TERI account will be based on information received up to that point because your account is considered to be in an *estimated status*.

After your employer submits your final earnable compensation information, retirement contributions for your 12 highest consecutive quarters of earnable compensation will be audited. Your AFC may be adjusted accordingly after the audit and to include unused sick leave only. This is called *finalized without annual leave status*. Your account will remain in this status for the duration of your TERI period.

Upon termination of employment at the end of your TERI participation, your annuity will be recalculated to include payment for up to 45 days of unused annual leave paid at termination. This is *post-finalized status with annual leave*.

***You may participate in TERI only once. If you retired previously and received a service or a disability retirement annuity under SCRS, you are not eligible to participate in the TERI program.***



## Post-Retirement Information

*For your convenience, the Retirement Systems offers direct deposit of monthly annuity checks.*



### Retirement Checks

Retirement checks are mailed or directly deposited into your bank account on the last business day of each month. We strongly encourage all payees to participate in direct deposit; however, if you do not have a bank account into which benefits may be automatically deposited you may receive a paper check each month. If you do not receive your check within five business days, please contact the Retirement Systems. Endorse all checks as drawn. If someone else must endorse your checks, notify the Retirement Systems immediately. It is also very important to notify the Retirement Systems in writing of any change of your home mailing address.

### Taxes

Your monthly annuity is subject to federal and state income taxes, but there is a South Carolina state income tax deduction for retirement income based on your age. If you do not have taxes withheld from your retirement check, you may need to file estimated taxes each quarter. Check with an accountant or tax advisor regarding your tax liability.

### Cost-of-Living Adjustments

Each July 1, eligible retired SCRS members will receive an annual guaranteed cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) of up to 1 percent provided that the increase in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) as of the prior December 31 is at least 1 percent. In addition, the State Budget and Control Board is allowed to grant a COLA in excess of 1 percent if the CPI increase exceeded 1 percent and if the unfunded liability amortization period for SCRS does not exceed 30 years. The total increase, including the guaranteed 1 percent, cannot exceed 4 percent. If you retire under the early retirement provisions at age 55 with 25 years of service, you are not eligible for COLAs until the second July 1 after you reach age 60 or the second July 1st after the date you would have attained 28 years of service credit had you not retired.

### Retiree Group Life Insurance

As a non-working retiree, if you die and your last employer prior to retirement is covered by the group life insurance benefit (see Page 2), a benefit based on your service credit will be paid to your beneficiaries as follows:

Years of Service Credit	Benefit
10 to 19 years of service credit	\$2,000
20 to 27 years of service credit	\$4,000
28 or more years of service credit	\$6,000



## Returning to Covered Employment

If you return to work after retirement, there is no limit on the dollar amount that you may earn as compensation; however, you must be retired for at least 15 consecutive calendar days before returning to work for an employer covered by the Retirement Systems.

The TERI period counts toward the 15-day break requirement. If you return to covered employment sooner than 15 consecutive calendar days after retirement, your retirement annuity will be suspended while you remain employed by a covered employer. A severance from employment is required at the end of the TERI program before a member may return to covered employment.

If you work 48 continuous months for a covered employer with an annual salary of at least 75 percent of the AFC used to calculate your retirement annuity, you may elect to rejoin SCRS. If you rejoin, you may elect to repay your retirement annuity and purchase service credit for that 48-month period by making a payment equal to the amount you would have contributed plus the interest your contributions would have accrued if you had been an active member for months during the 48-month period you did not make contributions as a retiree.

For months that you made contributions as a retiree during the 48-month period, you would only be required to pay back the retirement benefits received to purchase this time if you wish to purchase this period of time. Your subsequent retirement annuity will be computed as if you are retiring for the first time. Your TERI period does not count toward the 48 months and cannot be purchased as service credit if you rejoin the Retirement Systems.

## Group Life Insurance

TERI participants and retired contributing members are eligible for an increased group life insurance benefit of payment equal to their annual salary in lieu of the standard \$2,000, \$4,000 or \$6,000 retired member benefit.

## Contribution Rates

Retired members who return to covered employment make employee contributions as well. Members whose participation in the TERI program began prior to July 1, 2005, do not make employee contributions during their TERI period.

Retired member employee contributions will be posted to your retirement account; however, as a retiree (including TERI participants) you will not earn additional service credit or receive interest on your account.

*Certain members, such as elected officials and those designated by the Department of Education, may retire and return to work without a break in service.*



## Beneficiaries

Active members may designate three types of beneficiaries:

- Beneficiaries for your in-service death annuity. Multiple beneficiaries share equally in survivor annuities;
- Trustees or contingent beneficiaries in case of death of the primary beneficiaries. All primary beneficiaries must be deceased before any contingent beneficiaries are paid; and
- Group life insurance beneficiaries.

You may name your estate; however, monthly annuity payments cannot be paid to an estate.

### Beneficiary and Payment Plan Changes

#### Pre-Retirement

Generally, you may change your beneficiaries at any time before retirement.

#### Post-Retirement

##### Retiree Group Life Insurance

You may change your retiree group life insurance beneficiary at any time regardless of the payment plan you selected.

#### Option A

You may change your beneficiary for retirement benefits at any time. If you have a change in marital status (death of spouse, marriage, divorce), you may also select a new option within one year of the qualifying event.

#### Option B and Option C

If all of your beneficiaries predecease you, your annuity will revert to Option A effective on the date the last beneficiary died. You must notify the Retirement Systems upon the death of a beneficiary. You may then select a new beneficiary under Option A. If you have a change in marital status (death of spouse, marriage, divorce), you may also select a new option within one year of the qualifying event.

#### Payment Plan Changes

Your form of monthly payment may not be changed more than twice, regardless of the number of events (death of a designated beneficiary or change in marital status) that occur. A reversion to Option A upon the death of your beneficiary will count as one of the two changes. If a second beneficiary predeceases you after you have again selected Option B or Option C, you will revert automatically to Option A; however, no further form of payment changes will be allowed. Changes in form of payment occurring before January 1, 2001, are not included in the limitation provision.

*It is important to keep your address and beneficiaries current at all times. Contact Customer Services at (800) 868-9002, (803) 737-6800, or [cs@retirement.sc.gov](mailto:cs@retirement.sc.gov) for assistance.*



## In-Service Death

As an active contributing member who dies in service, your designated beneficiary may be entitled to receive the benefits listed below:

**If you are under age 60 and have less than one year of service credit:**

- Active member Group Life Insurance benefit if your death was job-related; and
- Refund of employee contributions plus interest.

**If you are under age 60 and have 1-14 years of service credit:**

- Active member Group Life Insurance benefit; and
- Refund of employee contributions plus interest.

**If you have 15 or more years of service credit, five years of which must be earned service:**

- Active member Group Life Insurance benefit; and
- Beneficiary's choice of monthly annuity or refund of employee contributions plus interest.

**If you are age 60 or older with at least five years of earned service as of your date of death:**

- Active member Group Life Insurance benefit (must have at least one year of service); and
- Beneficiary's choice of monthly annuity or refund of employee contributions plus interest.

## Death after Retirement

When you die, survivor benefits may be paid according to the retirement annuity payment plan you elected.

*Have questions about your benefits? Contact Customer Services at (800) 868-9002, (803) 737-6800, or [cs@retirement.sc.gov](mailto:cs@retirement.sc.gov) for answers.*



# Disability Retirement

## Who May Apply

You may apply for disability retirement if you become permanently disabled **before you leave covered employment** and you:

- are under age 65; and
- have five or more years of earned service credit toward
- retirement (see *Correlated Systems* on Page 1).

The five-year service requirement is waived if you can substantiate that your disability is the result of an on-the-job injury.

For retirement purposes, you are considered permanently disabled if you become physically or mentally incapable of performing the regular duties of your job and your disability is likely to be permanent. Becoming disabled does not automatically qualify you for disability retirement; you must file an application and go through the review process.

You may arrange with your employer to make your Retirement Systems' contributions through your employer if your disability requires you to be placed in an employer-approved leave status while receiving Workers' Compensation benefits. Doing so will ensure that you will continue to earn Retirement Systems' service credit during your Workers' Compensation leave period.

Be sure to apply for disability benefits while you are still in service with a covered employer. Since many Workers' Compensation claims are often settled after covered employment has ended, do not wait to apply for disability benefits until your Workers' Compensation claim is finalized.

If your disability claim is denied, the continuance of paying contributions and earning Retirement Systems' service credit may be important to your long-term retirement plans. Retired members who work for a covered employer are not eligible to apply for disability benefits.

## How to Apply

If you meet the disability filing criteria, go to our Web site or contact Customer Services for a disability retirement packet. When you file your disability retirement claim, please include as much evidence as possible to support your claim.

**You should file your application for disability retirement as soon as you become disabled. You must apply prior to leaving covered employment or you will not be eligible to participate in the disability retirement program.**

*It is important that you file your application for disability retirement as soon as you become disabled and before you leave covered employment.*





If you do not receive notification of our receipt of your application within 10 days after you submit it, please contact us.

If you are eligible for service retirement when you become disabled, you may apply for service retirement while awaiting determination of your disability claim; however, you will receive only one type of payment (service or disability) if your disability claim is approved.

### Processing the Claim

Your medical records will be obtained from your health care providers and evaluated to determine the severity and limiting effects of your physical or mental impairment. The final determination is made by the Retirement Systems.

**Please allow a minimum of three months after all required documentation has been received from you, your employer, and your health care providers for your disability application to be processed.** If you have not received our decision within three months, please contact Customer Services toll free at (800) 868-9002, at (803) 737-6800, or at [cs@retirement.sc.gov](mailto:cs@retirement.sc.gov).

### Effective Date

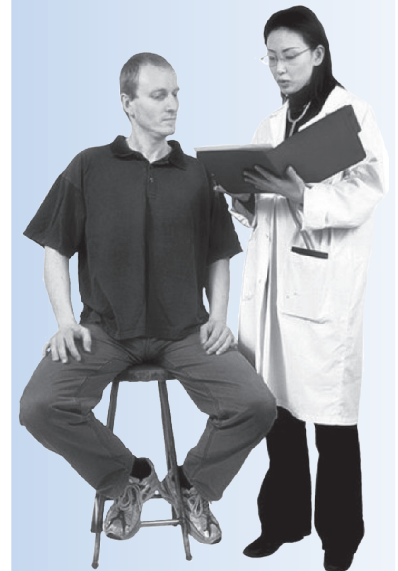
If your disability retirement claim is approved, the effective date for annuity benefits will be the 30th day after your application is received by the Retirement Systems or the day after your last day on your employer's payroll, whichever is later.

A disability annuity, once approved, may be discontinued if:

- you regain a certain earning capacity; **or**
- medical evidence indicates that you are no longer disabled; **or**
- the Retirement Systems has scheduled a continuing disability review and does not approve continuing disability retirement payments.

Periodic medical reexaminations may be required up to age 65. If the Retirement Systems determines that your disability benefits should cease because of an improvement in your medical condition, your retirement benefits will stop the month of your scheduled review or the month of the Retirement Systems' decision, whichever is later.

***Disability retirees have the same payment plan options as service retirees. See Pages 9-10 for more details.***



## Annuity Payments

A disability applicant may select the same payment plans as a service retiree (see Pages 9-10).

Because the Retirement Systems does **not** determine your disability based on the criteria for a disability that is total and permanent, your disability benefits are considered to be a normal distribution from your retirement account. For tax information, contact the Internal Revenue Service, the SC Department of Revenue if you live in South Carolina, and/or your personal tax advisor.

## Returning to Employment While Receiving a Disability Retirement Annuity

Disability retirees should report earnings from any gainful (public or private) employment to the Retirement Systems annually because there is an earnings limitation for all employment which is applied on a calendar-year basis. You may earn the difference between your adjusted AFC at retirement and your disability retirement annuity without affecting your retirement benefits (see example at left).

Your AFC may be adjusted each year for inflation for earnings limitation purposes only. This increase generally matches the percentage increase of the CPI, but can be no more than 10 percent. These adjustments affect the amount you can earn while receiving a disability retirement annuity; however, they do not affect the amount of your benefit.

If you earn more than your adjusted AFC, your monthly annuity will be reduced or possibly canceled. If you return to work with an employer covered by the Retirement Systems and your salary is equal to or greater than your adjusted AFC, your disability retirement annuity ceases and you must become an active member of the system.

At age 65 there is no earnings limitation for public or private employment.

Retired members who work for a covered employer will make tax-deferred employee contributions for the duration of their covered employment and are eligible for an increased group life insurance benefit equal to one year's annual salary (see Page 2).

### Example

AFC at retirement (adjusted for inflation)	\$ 35,000
Annual disability retirement annuity	- \$ 14,950
Disability retiree can earn difference (for the calendar year)	<b>\$ 20,050</b>

## Need to Contact Us?

### **Mailing Address**

South Carolina Retirement Systems  
P.O. Box 11960  
Columbia, SC 29211-1960

### **Location**

Fontaine Business Center  
202 Arbor Lake Drive  
Columbia, South Carolina 29223

### **Office Hours**

8:15 AM - 4:45 PM

### **Customer Services**

(803) 737-6800  
(800) 868-9002 (SC only)  
cs@retirement.sc.gov

### **Internet Web Site**

[www.retirement.sc.gov](http://www.retirement.sc.gov)

### **State Budget and Control Board**

**Mark Sanford, Chairman**  
*Governor*

**Grady L. Patterson, Jr.**  
*State Treasurer*

**Richard Eckstrom**  
*Comptroller General*

**Hugh K. Leatherman, Sr.**  
*Chairman, Senate Finance Committee*

**Daniel T. Cooper**  
*Chairman, Ways and Means Committee*

**Frank W. Fusco**  
*Executive Director*

### **South Carolina Retirement Systems**

**Peggy G. Boykin, CPA**  
*Director*

## Need to Locate Us?

### **Directions from Downtown Columbia**

The Retirement Systems' office is located at 202 Arbor Lake Drive, approximately five miles north of Columbia. If you wish to reach our office from downtown Columbia, head north on the Bull Street Extension, which becomes SC-277, and exit right onto Fontaine Road. Then turn right on Fontaine Road, and make another right into the Fontaine Business Center (Arbor Lake Drive). You will see signs directing you to the Retirement Systems' building and visitors' parking area.

### **Directions from the Interstate**

#### **From I-20 (Augusta or Florence)**

Take Exit 73-A onto SC-277 toward Columbia and exit at Fontaine Road. Then turn right on Fontaine Road, and make another right into the Fontaine Business Center (Arbor Lake Drive). You will see signs directing you to the Retirement Systems' building and visitors' parking area.

#### **From I-26 East (Spartanburg)**

Take I-20 East toward Florence and take Exit 73-A onto SC-277 toward Columbia. Exit at Fontaine Road and turn right. Make another right into the Fontaine Business Center (Arbor Lake Drive). You will see signs directing you to the Retirement Systems' building and visitors' parking area.

#### **From I-26 West (Charleston)**

Take Exit 116 (I-77 North) toward Charlotte and exit onto I-20 toward Augusta (Exit 16). Take Exit 73-A onto SC-277 toward Columbia and exit at Fontaine Road. Then turn right onto Fontaine Road, and make another right into the Fontaine Business Center (Arbor Lake Drive). You will see signs directing you to the Retirement Systems' building and visitors' parking area.

#### **From I-77 South (Charlotte)**

Take Exit 18 onto SC-277. Exit at Fontaine Road and turn right. Make another right into the Fontaine Business Center (Arbor Lake Drive). You will see signs directing you to the Retirement Systems' building and visitors' parking area.

# Rate this Handbook

Please let us know how we're doing by responding to the items below, clipping this survey from the handbook, and returning to: South Carolina Retirement Systems. Communications Department, PO Box 11960, Columbia, SC 29211-1960. Thank you!

1. Please rate the content/usefulness of this handbook.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Excellent	Above Average	Average	Below Average	Poor

2. Please rate the readability of this handbook.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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3. Please rate the appearance of this handbook.

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## Comments

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